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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 000248

SIPDIS

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TAGS: MOPS MARR PREL PTER IZ AF NL

SUBJECT: DUTCH MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS: IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. 03 THE HAGUE 3060 (NOTAL)

1B. 03 THE HAGUE 3002 (NOTAL)

1C. 03 THE HAGUE 2726 (NOTAL)

1D. 03 STATE 318096 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARY DALY FOR REASONS
1.5 (B AND D).

11. (S) Summary: In anticipation of new Dutch FM Ben Bot's travel to Washington February 9 for meetings with the Secretary and at NSC and DOD we offer a snapshot of several SIPDIS

aspects of Dutch military participation in the Global War on Terrorism presently under discussion in the Netherlands. The GONL is reviewing its role in Operation Iraqi Freedom, NATO ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom to include extending current deployments and possibly initiating new ones. We judge FM Bot's visit a good opportunity to press the Dutch to make and/or renew strong contributions to all of these missions. The contributions are valuable in their own right and would also bolster Defense Minister Kamp's position in supporting the need to maintain capable, deployable forces in the face of budgetary pressures and to use those forces in support of our shared goals. Asking clearly for what we want, especially if we want the Dutch to lead a PRT or contribute forces to OEF, (or both), helps those in the Netherlands who support robust Dutch participation. Otherwise, the legacy of Srebrenica can lead to the Dutch looking to undertake less difficult responsibilities. End Summary.

Iraq

12. (C) The Cabinet renewed the deployment of Dutch troops in Iraq on November 28, 2003 and parliament concurred with the decision on December 11 (ref A). The Dutch presently have approximately 1100 personnel, mostly infantry, conducting stabilization operations in Al Muthanna province as part of the UK's Multi-National Division Southeast. (Note: In addition to its military contributions, the GONL committed at Madrid to provide 10 million Euros for the Humanitarian Multilateral Trust Fund and set aside three million Euros to facilitate Dutch business opportunities in Iraq. The Dutch have funded establishment of an Iraqi missing persons bureau, and are considering assisting in exhuming mass graves. The Dutch have also made available a Dutch air force Fokker transport aircraft to support the UN World Food Program's efforts in Iraq. End note.) The current military deployment Al Muthanna is now scheduled to expire July 15. We understand from UK sources that the British intend to request the Dutch to extend their deployment beyond July. MFA and MOD sources advise the GONL intends to start looking at this issue in earnest in April and Defense Minister Kamp has been floating trial balloons in the press that a renewal may be coming. We judge it would be helpful to stress to FM Bot the continued importance of Dutch participation in stabilization operations in Iraq and urge renewal of that deployment in due course. Amb. Sobel will begin this process in his February 3 call on FM Bot.

ISAF

13. (C) The Cabinet approved deployment of six Dutch air force Apache attack helicopters to Afghanistan in support of NATO's ISAF mission (ref B) on January 30. Since the conclusion of their co-leadership of ISAF III with Germany last August, the GONL has been exploring options for further Dutch involvement on the ground in Afghanistan. MFA sources advise the Dutch are considering making a nominal contribution of personnel to the German PRT in Kunduz. Separately, the GONL is particularly focused on current NATO deliberations on taking over additional PRTs in Afghanistan and there is an expectation that former Dutch FM and new NATO SYG Jaap de Hoop Scheffer will be eager to get Dutch participation in a PRT. MFA and MOD sources note there are considerable operational, logistical and security questions that would need to be addressed to satisfy the exhaustive requirements of the GONL's approval procedure for deployments. (Note: We judge the most important of these to be provisions for in extremis extraction -- a legacy of the Dutch experience in Srebrenica -- as well as assurances that an area is stable before Dutch troops are deployed. End note.) There is a

certain level of enthusiasm for the PRT concept both in parliament and in the MFA given that PRTs involve elements of two Dutch fortés -- stabilization and development. At the same time, there is considerable skepticism and/or budding opposition to PRTs in the military which is concerned about the force protection required, but also has a strong preference to involve the Dutch armed forces in what it perceives to be more combat-oriented operations. We recommend that it would help the GONL internal political dialogue to emphasize to FM Bot the importance we attach to PRTs as part of achieving success for NATO's mission in Afghanistan.

OEF

¶4. (S) The Dutch air force's participation in the EPAF F-16 squadron flying out of Manas, Kyrgyzstan, ended in October 2003, and Dutch naval assets (a frigate, a submarine and a P3 maritime patrol aircraft) have also returned from the region. The Dutch have been considering for more than a year a possible deployment of Dutch army special operations forces to serve with CJTF-180 (ref C). The leadership of the Dutch Army is very eager to undertake such a deployment and further to ref D, post facilitated a dialogue between MOD and SOCCENT to discuss possible options for employment of Dutch SOF assets in CJTF-180. A key political concern expressed by both MFA and MOD sources is the possibility that Dutch SOF may detain Al Qaeda and/or Taliban members who may in turn be sent to the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay. While we understand MOD lawyers have approved Dutch use of a practice employed by other coalition partners (detaining suspects and calling for U.S. personnel to arrest them), concerns remain as to the political viability of such an approach and whether ministers would be prepared to defend it in parliament. That said, in addition to the utility of Dutch SOF assets to CJTF-180, we judge the political benefit of such a deployment would be to get a well-trained/equipped ally involved in combat operations as opposed to only peacekeeping and stabilization (Note: the Dutch Army has not been involved in combat operations since 1962 in the former Dutch New Guinea. End note.) The GONL advises they have received enough information from CENTCOM further to consultations arranged as per ref D in order to make a recommendation to Ministers. We believe it would help the Dutch decision-making process to underscore the value of a Dutch SOF contribution to OEF.

Conclusion

¶5. (S) We do not accept the assertion of some of our Dutch interlocutors that their participation in various military operations is a zero-sum game. When asked to fill a pressing need (such as with the Apaches, or with the dispatch of the Dutch Navy's LPD to Liberia) a way has been found. The Dutch have a good record of contributions to the GWOT both in Iraq and Afghanistan and we think FM Bot's visit is a useful opportunity to both acknowledge the value of these contributions and to urge the Dutch to do more. Defense Minister Kamp has laid out an ambitious program for restructuring the Dutch military along more deployable lines in the face of significant mandated budget cuts and is contemplating using the Dutch military for more offensive missions. Strong expressions to FM Bot of U.S. interest in continued and new Dutch deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan will help in the Dutch decision-making process as well as assist Kamp in defending the need to maintain capable Dutch forces and to employ them in pursuing our shared priorities.
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